

## **The First 50 Women in Idaho Law**

### **DARLA SANDERS WILLIAMSON**

**October 6, 1972**



**Darla Sanders Williamson** was born to Boyce and Ruby Sanders in Monterey Park, California. She lived in Monterey Park for a mere two weeks before moving onward to Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma, Oregon and finally to Idaho where she has remained ever since. While in Oregon, Williamson attended college at the Good Samaritan School of Nursing and Willamette University where she received her Bachelor's degree in 1968. After graduating from college, Williamson moved to Sun Valley, Idaho, where she worked as a waitress and spent time perfecting her downhill technique.

While she enjoyed the powder and slopes of Sun Valley, Williamson decided to continue her education. Although most working women at that time found themselves as either teachers or nurses, Williamson realized other opportunities awaited her. She decided to pursue one – law – and entered the University of Idaho College of Law in 1969. The grossly disproportionate number of men to women in the legal profession soon became evident as Williamson found herself one of only two women in her law school class.

Williamson graduated from the University of Idaho College of Law in 1972 and was admitted to practice in Idaho on October 6, 1972. Williamson immediately moved to Valley County, Idaho, and worked in private practice until 1979. Despite her hard work, Williamson soon found that women lawyers were often not taken seriously as competent legal professionals. One day, while working in her office, a gentleman came in seeking legal advice. After realizing that Williamson was not the secretary but the attorney, the gentleman quickly left the office stating that he would not obtain legal counsel from a woman!

These types of experiences did not deter Williamson. To the contrary, Williamson ran for and was elected to the position of Valley County Prosecutor from 1975 until 1977. In 1979, she became a Fourth District Magistrate Judge and in January 2001, Governor Dirk Kempthorne appointed her to the position of District Judge for the Fourth Judicial District of the State of Idaho. In October 2001, Williamson's fellow fourth district judges elected her to the position of Administrative Judge where she still serves today.

Williamson is married to Max Williamson, who she married during Christmas break of her final year at law school. Max has a Masters in Business and worked for the McCall Donnelly School District before retiring in July of 2001. She and Max have two sons, Zak and Isaac. Zak has a Masters in Aerospace Engineering and presently works in Boulder, Colorado. Isaac is in his fifth year at the University of Idaho pursuing dual business degrees.

In addition to her busy work schedule, Williamson maintains an active lifestyle. She walks two miles to and from work each day, is a YMCA member and enjoys golfing and hiking. In 1982, she obtained a private pilot's license. She and Max own a Cessna 172 that they fly back and forth

to their house in McCall. Not lacking a sense of adventure, the couple bought a fixer-upper home in the North End of Boise in July 2001 and have been working on it and living in it ever since — even in the middle of winter with no roof. Although the house was taken down to the two by fours, it is almost completed, with an additional second story and gourmet kitchen.

When asked what she likes most about being a judge, Williamson says that she enjoys the involvement in public service and helping people from a neutral standpoint. And, she says, she would recommend her life to anyone.